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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000498

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STATE FOR EUR/SCE, EUR (DAS BRYZA AND DAS DICARLO),  
USNATO FOR AMB NULAND

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NATO](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: SCENESETTER FOR EAPC SECURITY SUMMIT  
BILATS

REF: A. SKOPJE 483

[B](#). SKOPJE 492

[C](#). SKOPJE 476

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

OVERVIEW -- FOCUS ON NATO, STIFFEN RESOLVE

[1](#). (SBU) Macedonia's leaders are hoping to showcase the country's organizational and logistics capabilities in hosting the EAPC summit, which will be set amidst the impressive natural beauty of Lake Ohrid. They have heard and understood our message on the steps they need to take to strengthen their NATO candidacy. They insist that they remain focused on taking those steps (ref A).

[2](#). (C) The June 10 meeting in Tirana of the A-3 prime ministers with President Bush, and the positive message Macedonia received from the President, boosted the GOM's confidence about its NATO prospects and raised expectations in the local media that NATO enlargement would be a "package deal" that would bring all three A-3 candidates into the fold at the Bucharest Summit. As a result, the GOM needs to hear a consistent message reminding it that NATO will make individual assessments of the aspirants, and urging it to stiffen its resolve to fully implement NATO reform measures, including implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement (FWA), strengthening rule of law, combating corruption, and managing relations with Athens over the name dispute.

SOME PROGRESS ON NATO REQUIREMENTS....

[3](#). (SBU) Macedonia has made some progress on NATO-required steps, including combating corruption (ref B) and judicial reforms (ref C). It is moving ahead to open a "big fish" corruption case against two former bank officials (associated with one of the current government's coalition partners), and is leading most countries in the region in Freedom House's 2007 "Judicial Framework and Independence Ratings." The government has made strong progress since the beginning of the year on combating TIP, stepping up anti-TIP raids and arrests, in stark contrast to the inactivity on the TIP front that characterized its first four months in office.

¶4. (SBU) After several months of negotiations facilitated by the U.S. and EU, the government concluded on May 29 a verbal political agreement with ethnic Albanian opposition party DUI, which ended DUI's boycott of parliament. The government also is moving ahead with plans to begin phase II of the FWA-mandated decentralization process, due to begin July 1. The parliament currently is engaged in discussions on intelligence oversight, and the government is discussing options for consolidating Macedonia's three intelligence agencies under one roof to enhance operational efficiency and tighten protection of classified information. Progress on defense reforms, stalled for much of the past year, has resumed; the government is likely to meet the required deadlines for completing those reforms.

...BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN

¶5. (SBU) Despite progress, challenges remain. The government has failed to take the steps necessary to implement fully the May 29 agreement with DUI, including convening working groups on a draft law on the use of languages, and a social package of benefits to support victims of the 2001 conflict. Increasing equitable representation of ethnic minorities in the public administration, another FWA-mandated requirement, has moved ahead only marginally since the government took office. Progress on a religious freedom bill has stalled and is unlikely to be resolved this year, given recent provocative actions in Macedonia by the Serbian and Greek Orthodox Churches.

SUPPORT FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP STILL STRONG

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¶6. (SBU) Public support for NATO membership remains strong, consistently around 90 percent of those polled. No party in parliament opposes membership in NATO; the Parliament recently adopted a measure reiterating Macedonia's support for NATO and endorsing eventual membership. Despite a wide range of political differences, even President Crvenkovski and PM Gruevski share the same position when it comes to underscoring the importance of NATO membership for the future of the country and regional stability.

NAME ISSUE -- THE PERENNIAL THORN

¶7. (C) The renaming of Skopje Airport as "Alexander the Great Airport," despite our strong admonitions, was the Gruevski government's single biggest misstep in dealing with Athens on the name dispute. Since then, Skopje has found itself on the defensive in countering a Greek barrage of criticism. The Macedonians have made it clear to us that they are willing to enter NATO under the temporary designation "FYROM," but increasingly are worried that Athens might follow through on threats to ignore the 1995 Interim Accord and block accession absent a resolution of the name issue.

¶8. (C) In the meantime, the GOM belatedly has taken some steps to counter Greek charges of irredentism. The Minister of Defense recently gave a tour to the Greek, U.S., UK, and Slovenian (NATO Contact Embassy) ambassadors of the Macedonian military museum and military academy to answer Greek accusations that those institutions were showcasing or using irredentist materials. Although the visit did not convince the Greek Ambassador, it did demonstrate the government's willingness to respond to what it considers wildly misplaced charges that it is promoting irredentism.

KOSOVO -- CONTINUED STRONG SUPPORT FOR AHTISAARI PLAN

¶9. (SBU) The government continues to express strong public support for the Ahtisaari plan, and for a UNSCR that would implement it. Relations with Pristina are good, with regular high-level meetings between the PISG and GOM officials. The government has indicated it does not want to rush a decision on recognition of an independent Kosovo, but recognizes the importance of not delaying too long; it is likely that it will follow the EU and US lead on recognition.

PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER STILL LOCKED IN COMBAT

¶10. (C) PM Gruevski's VMRO-DPMNE party does not recognize President Crvenkovski as Macedonia's legitimate head of state, claiming that the 2004 elections in which he was elected were fraudulent, despite their having been approved by ODIHR and other international observers. As a result, the two leaders have been locked in verbal combat since Gruevski began his mandate in August 2006. The feud has been marked by largely GOM mudslinging in the media, with Gruevski occasionally using his coalition partner DPA (eAlbanian) as a surrogate to spread insidious rumors about the President. We have asked both sides to lower the rhetoric and to demonstrate national unity on the NATO front. The EAPC will be one litmus test of their willingness to do that, with President Crvenkovski hosting the welcome cocktail, to which Gruevski has been invited.

MILOVANOVIC